



St George's Singers

St George's Singers

2025–26 Season

Feel the Spirit
Carols by Candlelight
Jenkins *The Armed Man:*
Fauré *Requiem*
From that Distant Shore

St George's Singers



Marcus Farnsworth
President, St George's Singers

President

Marcus Farnsworth MA DipRAM ARAM

Vice-Presidents

Sasha Johnson Manning composer and singer

Stephen Threlfall conductor and educationalist

Stephen Williams musician and education consultant

Musical Director

Neil Taylor

Accompanist

Peter Durrant

Tickets

Tel: 01663 764012

Email: tickets@st-georges-singers.org.uk

Online: www.st-georges-singers.org.uk

General enquiries

Tel: 01625 875437

Email: enquiries@st-georges-singers.org.uk

St George's Singers is a Registered Charity, no. 508686, and a member of Making Music, the National Federation of Music Societies

www.st-georges-singers.org.uk



Welcome to our 2025–26 season



John Smith

Chair, St George's Singers

Dear Friends

St George's Singers' inaugural performance, Handel's *Messiah*, was in 1956. In the 68 seasons that followed (2025–26 being our 69th) the Choir sang an amazing 854 pieces (excluding Christmas carols), comprising more than 500 different works by 235 composers. Some of those composers come up quite frequently. Handel, for example, has featured 52 times over the 68 years and Elgar 33 times! Some compositions have also been deservedly popular in our programming, such as Fauré's *Requiem*, with nine performances over the years. The Choir first sang it in 1970, and will be singing it again this season, in Manchester Cathedral on Sunday 22 March 2026.

Throughout the Choir's history we have enjoyed excellent professional guidance and support from a number of conductors and accompanists, although perhaps not as many as you might think, as our professionals tend to stay with us for quite a long time. Neil has been our musical director for nearly 20 years, and Pete our accompanist for 10 years. Of special note is Tim Hill, who was the rehearsal accompanist for our first Fauré *Requiem* in 1970, and who was with us from the mid-1960s through to the end of the 1970s. The 100th anniversary of Tim's birth coincides with our performance of the Fauré in March, and we are delighted that Tim's family are celebrating his anniversary, and the work he did with us in those early days, by sponsoring the concert. Tim's son tells me that the *Requiem* was a great favourite with his father, and it will be lovely to have his family with us at the concert.

All this talk of this season being our 69th obviously points to the following season being our 70th – a really significant achievement for the Choir! There will be echoes of our long history throughout that very special season, and we look forward to seeing you through both this season and the next.



Saturday 22 November 2025, 7.30pm
St George's Church, Buxton Road, Stockport SK2 6NU

Feel the Spirit

Chilcott *Nidaros Jazz Mass / Five Days that Changed the World / Ophelia, Caliban and Miranda*
Pärt *Beatitudes*
Rutter *Feel the Spirit*

Conductor **Neil Taylor**
Soloist **Melanie Marshall**

The year 2025 brings three important anniversaries: Bob Chilcott (70), Sir John Rutter (80) and the great Estonian composer Arvo Pärt (90). We recognise these three remarkable and influential composers of choral music with a concert featuring pieces which originate in very different sound worlds, but which are all inspired by a deep spirituality: from Chilcott's works that draw on many different jazz styles, through Pärt's sacred *Beatitudes*, to Rutter's stirring arrangement of well-known spirituals, written especially for mezzo-soprano Melanie Marshall, one of Britain's most versatile vocal artists, Join St George's Singers for this big birthday celebration!

£18, £10 students/children, group discounts

Saturday 6 December 2025, 7.00pm
St George's Church, Buxton Road, Stockport SK2 6NU

Carols by Candlelight

Conductor **Neil Taylor**
Organ **Peter Durrant**
with
Bradshaw Hall Primary School Choir
Director **Vicky Sunderland**

The Christmas season doesn't start until our traditional Carols by Candlelight concert! Join St George's Singers and the amazing pupils of Bradshaw Hall in the candlelit surroundings of St George's Church for an evening of carols old and new, some surprise musical interludes, and of course the free mince pies and mulled wine. All designed to keep away the winter chill.

£15 full, £8 students, £5 under-16s, £3 under-5s

Saturday 17 January 2026

9.30–10.15am (singers' registration), 6.00pm (concert)

St George's Church, London Road, Poynton SK12 1NH

Singing Day

Karl Jenkins *The Armed Man*

Conductor **Neil Taylor**

Accompanist **Peter Durrant**

Commissioned 25 years ago by the Royal Armouries to mark the new millennium, Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace* is one of the most popular choral works written this century. With texts in English, Latin, Arabic and French, and music inspired by many religions and cultures around the world, it was dedicated to the victims of the Kosovo conflict, which was unfolding as it was being composed, and offered hope for a future time when peace would return. Although the traditional Catholic Mass provides the framework, this is a work for all peoples, all religions, all cultures.

£25 to sing (including music), £5 students, £5 audience

To register to sing, please download our Singing Day application form from www.st-georges-singers.org.uk, or contact Gillian Banks, tel 07803 205291, email singingday@st-georges-singers.org.uk

Sunday 22 March 2026, 7.30pm

Manchester Cathedral, Victoria St, Manchester M3 1SX

Fauré *Requiem*

Bairstow *Blessed city, heavenly Salem*

Dove *Seek him that maketh the seven stars*

Finzi *Lo, the full final sacrifice*

Todd *Christus est stella*

Conductor **Neil Taylor**

Organ **Darius Battiwalla**

An evening of music of the heavens, featuring works by English composers of the 20th and 21st centuries, and culminating in one of the most ethereal of all choral masterpieces, Gabriel Fauré's sublime *Requiem*. In the sacred surroundings of Manchester Cathedral, this concert offers space and time for reflection, hope and wonder.

This concert is generously sponsored by the Hill family, in memory of Tim Hill, former accompanist of St George's Singers.

£18, £10 students/children, group discounts

Saturday 27 June 2026, 7.30pm
St George's Church, Buxton Road, Stockport SK2 6NU

From that Distant Shore

Copland *In the Beginning*
Rutter *Sprig of Thyme*

plus works reflecting the story of America in music

The year 2026 sees the 250th anniversary of the signing of the American Declaration of Independence in 1776, an act which severed the political ties with Britain and created a new nation. In this concert we focus on the musical history of this new country, and present a selection of choral works from across the centuries that help tell the story of America through song: from British folk songs that the Pilgrim Fathers and other early adventurers would have known and could well have taken with them to that distant shore across the ocean, up to sacred and secular choral works by American composers of the modern age, works which have in their turn travelled back across the oceans to Europe and beyond.

£18, £10 students/children, group discounts

And more...

Come and Sing

This year we are holding three Come and Sing events on:

30 September 2025

27 January 2026

14 April 2026

Everyone is welcome to come and join St George's Singers in St George's Church Hall, Poynton, at our regular Tuesday evening rehearsal as we prepare for upcoming concerts.

For more information and to register interest, contact 01625 875437, email enquiries@st-georges-singers.org.uk, or visit our website, www.st-georges-singers.org.uk.

The Cheshire Consort

The Cheshire Consort chamber choir was formed by St George's Singers to sing at church and civil weddings and other formal events throughout Greater Manchester, Cheshire and North Wales.

For more information, telephone Alison McLay on 07591 586447, email enquiries@cheshireconsort.org.uk, or visit our website, www.cheshireconsort.org.uk.

St George's people



Neil Taylor Musical Director



Peter Durrant Accompanist

Neil Taylor is a sought after and renowned choral director, organist, piano accompanist, teacher and coach, based in the North West of England. After winning a Scholarship to the Royal College of Music, Neil held cathedral appointments in St Albans, Norwich, and Sheffield. During his time in Sheffield, the cathedral choir toured both at home and abroad (including Germany, Holland, France, Hungary, the Czech Republic and the USA) and broadcast frequently on BBC Radios 2, 3 & 4. His recordings include *Music for a Millennium*, a Classic FM Magazine Disc of the Year award winner, and numerous releases as organist and conductor, all to high critical acclaim. As solo organist, he has played at many of the major venues in the UK, and has worked with the Hallé, BBC Philharmonic, Northern Chamber Orchestra, Manchester Camerata, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia, the Orchestra of Opera North, the Orchestra of Welsh National Opera, Sir John Rutter, Huddersfield Choral and the Exon Singers. He is Music Director of St George's Singers, the Keele Bach Choir, and organist & keyboard studies teacher at Rossall School. He works regularly with the BBC as musical director and accompanist on *Songs of Praise* and the BBC *Young Chorister of the Year* competition.

Pete Durrant is the accompanist of St George's Singers, Hallé youth and training choirs, N-choir and RNCM chamber choir. He is a Staff Pianist at the Royal Northern College of Music and head accompanist at the Junior RNCM. Pete grew up in London, and was a chorister at Westminster Abbey, touring worldwide and singing at many high-profile events, including the funeral of Princess Diana. In 2004 he moved north to study music at Manchester University, where he learned piano with Tom Scott and was awarded the Proctor Gregg prize for performance at the end of his second year. In 2010 he went on to complete a Masters in Piano Performance at the Royal Northern College of Music, studying with Jeremy Young and Colin Stone. Pete has played with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, the Hallé Orchestra and Manchester Camerata, has been the accompanist of Stafford Choral Society, Keele Bach Choir, Manchester University Chorus, has directed and played for Manchester Chamber Choir, and has accompanied the Hallé Choir, BBCSO Chorus, Sheffield Philharmonic Chorus, Sheffield Chorale, Salford Choral Society, Leeds Philharmonic Chorus and Marple Choral Society. Pete was conductor of Leek Choral Society (for whom he wrote his *Requiem* in 2018), the University of Manchester's chamber choir, Ad Solem, as well as Keele Bach Choir in the second half of 2016.

St George's Singers

A passion for singing

The Choir is recognised as one of the most enterprising and innovative choirs in the North of England, with a passion for singing and a commitment to the highest choral standards. The Choir was formed in 1956 at St George's Church, Poynton, and today has around 100 members, travelling from Cheshire, Greater Manchester, Derbyshire and Yorkshire.

Under Musical Director Neil Taylor, the choir performs an extensive and eclectic repertoire that covers renaissance, baroque, classical, modern and jazz works and newly commissioned choral works. We put on four major concerts a year, hold an annual singing day, and are frequently invited to take part in collaborative ventures with other choirs and orchestras. We perform in venues across Greater Manchester, including the Bridgewater Hall, Royal Northern College of Music, The Stoller Hall, Manchester Cathedral and Gorton Monastery, as well as our 'home churches' of St George's in Stockport and Poynton. We have sung with world-class soloists such as Sir Willard White, James Gilchrist, Mark Padmore, Christopher Purves, Kitty Whately, Jacqui Dankworth and Elizabeth Watts. We commission new choral works, have led the BBC Daily Service from Emmanuel Church, Didsbury, appeared on BBC Radio 3's *In Tune*, and tour regularly in the UK, Europe, and in 2017, to celebrate our 60th Anniversary, Costa Rica.

Although we are a large choir, St George's Singers is an extremely friendly group with a lively musical and social life. We rehearse in Poynton every Tuesday evening in St George's Church Hall, and new members are always welcome. Entry is via audition, and we recommend you come along to a few rehearsals before auditioning. You can find out more about St George's Singers at www.st-georges-singers.org.uk.



Rehearsal for *Alexander's Feast*, St George's Church, Stockport, April 2025

Application form

There are five easy ways to buy tickets for our concerts:

Online: visit **www.st-georges-singers.org.uk**, go to the appropriate concert page and click 'Get Tickets'

Telephone: 01663 764012

Email: tickets@st-georges-singers.org.uk

On the door: pay by cash or card

Post: complete the Application Form below and overleaf, then post with your cheque, payable to 'St George's Singers Poynton', to:

The Ticket Secretary, 11 The Ridgeway, Disley, SK12 2JG

Your details

Please complete this form and tick the appropriate boxes.

Title First name

Surname

Address

Postcode Telephone

Email

Emailing list registration

If you wish to receive regular email news about St George's Singers and our concerts, please register here:

Please include me on your emailing list. I agree to my details being stored on St George's Singers' database. ☐

I do not wish to receive further information about St George's Singers. Please unsubscribe me. ☐

Note: we do not share your personal information with any third parties. A copy of St George's Singers' Privacy Policy can be found on our website.

Ticket booking form

Concert Date Price	No. of tickets	Price	Total £
Feel the Spirit 22/11/25 £18, £10			
Carols by Candlelight 6/12/25 £15, £8, £5, £3*			
Singing Day** 17/1/26 £5 (audience tickets only)			
Fauré Requiem 22/3/26 £18, £10			
From that Distant Shore 27/6/26 £18, £10			
GRAND TOTAL £			



For information on group discounts, please contact the Ticket Secretary on 01663 764012, tickets@st-georges-singers.org.uk.

* See page 4 for details of concessionary ticket prices for this concert. Please indicate price of ticket and number required.

** Anyone wishing to sing in the Singing Day should see our separate Singing Day brochure, available on our website, www.st-georges-singers.org.uk.

Friends of St George's Singers

The Friends of St George's Singers play an important part in the social and musical life of the Choir, as well as providing vital financial support. Annual membership of the Friends costs only £20 for Red Rose, and £30 for Gold Rose membership, though many Friends make more generous donations. Many long-standing Friends have been invited to become Life Friends, in recognition of their contribution to the Choir. Friends receive:

- reserved seats at concerts where available
- acknowledgement in programmes
- free coach transport to Manchester city centre venues, when available
- free concert programmes
- invitation to the annual Friends Reception

Patrons

We are immensely grateful to our Patrons, who contribute funds for specific purposes, such as sponsoring concerts or soloists, commissioning or purchasing music. If you or your company are interested in becoming a Patron, please contact the Chair at **chair@st-georges-singers.org.uk**.

We would like to offer special thanks to St George's Church, Stockport, for welcoming us to this amazing building, and allowing us to store our staging.

Newsletter

Sign up to our mailing list to receive the Choir's regular newsletter, providing concert information, news about Choir activities and special events in the choral music world.

Hemiola

Hemiola is an occasional publication which is full of fascinating facts about St George's Singers, our music and choral singing. You can download it, along with back issues, from our website, or sign up to our mailing list to receive it by email.

Recordings

The Choir has made a number of CD recordings, obtainable at concerts or via our website. The most recent, *The Christmas Life*, was selected for broadcast by Classic FM, and features traditional and modern carols, including special commissions by St George's Singers. You can also hear the Choir in performance at recent concerts on our website.

Social media

Follow St George's Singers and The Cheshire Consort on Facebook and Instagram.



2025–26 Season at a glance

22 November 2025	Feel the Spirit
6 December 2025	Carols by Candlelight
17 January 2026	Singing Day: <i>The Armed Man</i>
22 March 2026	Fauré <i>Requiem</i>
27 June 2026	From that Distant Shore

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